



NEWS RELEASE

HOWARD COUNTY COUNCIL

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Council Chair Deb Jung Files Legislation to Require Bird-Safe Building Designs in Howard County

Ellicott City, MD (February 21, 2020) – Wildlife researchers estimate that up to one billion birds, mainly migratory songbirds, are killed by collisions with glass every year in North America. In Howard County, researchers have found that bird strikes trend with national data. These deaths of vulnerable and threatened species are preventable through building design modifications recommended by the United States Green Building Council Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED).

CB11-2020, if passed, adds LEED's bird-safe building credits to Howard County's Green Building Law. The bill is co-sponsored by Councilmembers Liz Walsh and Christiana Rigby.

"This bill will make buildings safer for birds, consistently reducing bird deaths by 90 percent," said Council Chair Jung. "Bird-safe buildings are becoming more common and for a good reason. Simple changes to glass and façade design can save the lives of millions of birds."

"Bird-friendly building design also tends to be more energy efficient," said Councilmember Liz Walsh. "Thanks to the dedicated advocates who've helped Chair Jung craft this environmental win-win."

"This legislation emphasizes the important, yet often unnoticed role that birds play in our ecosystem and communities," said Councilmember Rigby. "CB11-2020 will ensure that future building in Howard County is conscious of our friends in the sky, and I am happy to join my colleagues in supporting this legislation."

Most collisions occur within the first 36 feet of a building during the migration seasons of spring and fall. Birds traveling thousands of miles during their journey often rest and forage in unfamiliar areas along the Eastern Seaboard.

"Birds see reflective glass as trees or sky and transparent glass as a way to fly where they are going," said Dr. Mark Southerland, former Chair of the Howard County Environmental Sustainability Board and Legislative Director for Safe Skies Maryland. "Nearly all birds, even the most healthy and best breeders, will die from brain trauma when they hit the glass. With these deaths, we lose seed dispersal, pest control, and the biodiversity we all love and depend on."

In order to qualify for LEED's bird-safe building credit (Pilot Credit #55), which was drafted in part by the American Bird Conservancy, the building must not exceed the allowable bird threat levels, calculated by percentages of certain types of façade materials within certain height levels, as well as outdoor lighting and fly-through considerations.

"We have the science, we have the tools, and we have the materials to save energy and make buildings safe for birds, without compromising design or function. We should never forget that saving both, after all, is in our own best interests," said Dr. Christine Sheppard, Director of Glass Collisions Program with the American Bird Conservancy.

The proposed legislation was pre-filed on February 21, 2020 and will be introduced at the Council's legislative session on Monday, March 2, 2020. Testimony will be accepted at the legislative public hearing on Monday, March 16, 2020. Howard County residents can sign up to testify on Tuesday, March 3, 2020, by visiting <https://apps.howardcountymd.gov/otestimony/>. If you would like to submit your testimony electronically, please email councilmail@howardcountymd.gov.

To read CB11-2020, visit <https://apps.howardcountymd.gov/olis/PrefiledLegislation.aspx>.

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